Copies of a Letter from the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to the Secretary of State

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MESSAGE

FROM THE

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

TRANSMITTING

COPIES OF A LETTER

FROM THE

BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS,

TO THE

SECRETARY OF STATE,

WITH

THE ANSWER OF THE LATTER.

JANUARY 6, 1814.

ORDERED TO LIE ON THE TABLE.

WASHINGTON CITY:

PRINTED BY ROGER C. WEIGHTMAN.

1814.

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MESSAGE.

To the Senate and House of
Representatives of the United States:

I transmit for the information of Congress, copies of a letter from the British secretary of state for foreign affairs, to the Secretary of State, with the answer of the latter.

In appreciating the accepted proposal of the government of Great Britain, for instituting negotiations for peace, Congress will not fail to keep in mind, that vigorous preparations for carrying on the war can in no respect impede the progress to a favorable result; whilst a relaxation of such preparations, should the wishes of the United States for a speedy restoration of the blessings of peace be disappointed, would necessarily have the most injurious consequences.

JAMES MADISON.

January 6th, 1814.

DOCUMENTS.

Lord Castlereagh to the Secretary of State.

(Copy.)

Foreign Office, November 4, 1813.

SIR,

I have the honor to enclose to you, for the information of the President of the United States, copy of a note which His Britannic Majesty's ambassador at the court of St. Petersburg was directed to present to the Russian government, as soon as His Royal Highness the Prince Regent was informed that plenipotentiaries had been nominated on the part of the American government for the purpose of negotiating for peace with Great Britain, under the mediation of His Imperial Majesty.

His Lordship having, by the last courier from the imperial head-quarters, acquainted me that the American commissioners now at St. Petersburg, have intimated, in reply to this overture, that they had no objection to a negotiation at London, and were equally desirous as the British government had declared itself to be, that this business should not be mixed with the affairs of the continent of Europe, but that their powers were limited to negotiate under the mediation of Russia.

Under these circumstances, and in order to avoid an unnecessary continuance of the calamities of war, the Prince Regent commands me to transmit by a flag of truce, to the American port nearest to the seat of government, the official note abovementioned, in order that the President, if he should feel

disposed to enter upon a direct negotiation for the restoration of peace between the two states, may give his directions accordingly.

In making this communication, I can assure you that the British government is willing to enter into discussion with the government of America for the conciliatory adjustment of the differences subsisting between the two states, with an earnest desire on their part to bring them to a favorable issue, upon principles of perfect reciprocity, not inconsistent with the established maxims of public law, and with the maritime rights of the British empire.

The admiral commanding the British squadron on the American station, will be directed to give the necessary protection to any persons proceeding to Europe, on the part of the government of the United States, in furtherance of this overture; or, should the American government have occasion to forward orders to their commission at St. Petersburg, to give the requisite facilities, by cartel or otherwise, to the transmission of the same.

I have the honor to be,
With the highest consideration, Sir,
Your most obdt. humble servant,

(Signed) CASTLEREAGH.

To the American Secretary of State, &c. &c. &c.

Translation of a note from Lord Cathcart to the Count de Nesselrode, dated Toplitz, 1st. September, 1813.

The undersigned, ambassador of His Britannic Majesty to the Emperor of all the Russias, desiring to avail himself of the first occasion to renew the subject respecting America, which was brought

into discussion in a conference at the moment of departure from Reichenbach, has the honor to address this note to the Count de Nesselrode.

Although the Prince Regent, for reasons which have been already made known, has not found himself in a situation to accept the mediation of His Imperial Majesty, for terminating the discussions with the United States of America, His Royal Highness desires, nevertheless, to give effect to the beneficent wishes which His Imperial Majesty has expressed, of seeing the war between Great Britain and America soon terminated, to the mutual satisfaction of the two governments.

With this view, His Royal Highness having learned that the envoys plenipotentiary of the United States for negotiating a peace with Great Britain, under the mediation of His Imperial Majesty, have arrived in Russia; notwithstanding that he finds himself under the necessity of not accepting the interposition of any friendly power in the question which forms the principal object in dispute between the two states, he is, nevertheless, ready to nominate plenipotentiaries to treat directly with the American plenipotentiaries.

His Royal Highness sincerely wishes that the conferences of these plenipotentiaries may result in re-establishing between the two nations, the blessing and the reciprocal advantages of peace.

If, through the good offices of His Imperial Majesty, this proposition should be accepted, the Prince Regent would prefer that the conferences should be held at London, on account of the facilities which it would give to the discussions.

But, if this choice should meet with insuperable obstacles, His Royal Highness would consent to substitute Gothenburg, as the place nearest to England.

The undersigned, &c. &c.

(Signed) CATHCART.

A Toplitz, le 1r September, 1813.

Le Soussigné ambassadeur de S. M. Britannique prés sa majesté l'empereur de toutes les Russies, desirant profiter de la première occasion pour renouveller une matière dont il a été question dans une conference au moment du depart de Reichenbach, touchant L'Amerique, a l'honneur d'adresser cette note à son excellence Monsieur le compte de Nesselrode.

Quoique le Prince Regent pour des raisons qui ont deja été communiquées, ne se soit pas trouvé dans le cas d'accepter la mediation de S. M. I. pour terminer les discussions avec les Etats Unis d'Amerique, S. A. R. desire neanmoins de donner effêt aux vœux bienfaisans que S. M. I. a declaré de pouvoir bientôt voir terminé la guerre entre la Grande Bretagne et l'Amerique au contentement mutuel des deux gouvernemens.

Pour cet objêt S. A. R. ayant sçu que les plenipotentiaries envoyés de la part des Etats Unis pour negocier une paix avec la Grande Bretagne sous la mediation de S. M. I. sont arrivés en Russie, non obstant qu'elle se trouve dans la necessité de ne pas accepter l'entremise d'aucune puissance amié pour la question qui fait l'objêt principale en dispute entre les deux Etats, elle est neanmoins prête à nommer des plenipotentiaires pour traiter directement avec les plenipotentiaires Americains.

Les vœux de S. A. R. sont bien sincères pour que les conferences de ces plenipotentiaires puissent reussir à retabler entre les deux peuples le bonheur et les avantages reciproques de la paix.

Si par les bons offices de S. M. Imperiale cette proposition seroit accepté, le Prince Regent prefereroit que les conferences puissent se tenir à Lon-

dres à cause des facilités qui en resulteroit pour les discussions.

Mais si ce choix rencontreroit des obstacles insuperables, S. A. R. consenteroit à substituer Gothenbourg comme l'endroit le plus rapproché de l'Angleterre.

Le Soussigné, &c.

(Signed) CATHCART.

The Secretary of State to Lord Castlereagh.

Department of State, 5th January, 1814.

MY LORD,

I have had the honor to receive by a flag of truce, your lordship's letter of the 4th of November last, and a copy of a note which His Britannic Majesty's ambassador at the court of St. Petersburg presented to the Russian government, on the first of September preceding.

By this communication it appears, that His Royal Highness the Prince Regent rejected the mediation offered by His Imperial Majesty to promote peace between the United States and Great Britain, but proposed to treat directly with the United States at Gothemburg, or London; and that he had requested the interposition of the good offices of the Emperor in favor of such an arrangement.

Having laid your lordship's communication before the President, I am instructed to state for the information of His Royal Highness the Prince Regent, that the President has seen with regret, this new obstacle to the commencement of a negotiation for the accommodation of differences between the United States and Great Britain. As

the Emperor of Russia was distinguished for his rectitude and impartiality, and was moreover engaged in a war as an ally of England, whereby it was his interest to promote peace between the United States and Great Britain, the President could not doubt that His Royal Highness the Prince Regent would accept the mediation, which His Imperial Majesty had offered to them. It was the confidence with which the high character of the Emperor inspired the President, that inclined him, disregarding considerations which a more cautious policy might have suggested, to accept the overture with promptitude, and to send ministers to St. Petersburg to take advantage of it It would have been very satisfactory to the President, if His Royal Highness the Prince Regent had found it compatible with the views of Great Britain to adopt a similar measure, as much delay might have been avoided in accomplishing an object which it is admitted is of high importance to both nations.

The course proposed as a substitute for negotiations at St Petersburg, under the auspices of the Emperor of Russia, could not, I must remark to your lordship, have been required for the purpose of keeping the United States unconnected, against Great Britain, with any affairs of the continent. There was nothing in the proposed mediation tending to such a result. The terms of the overture indicated the contrary. In offering to bring the parties together, not as an umpire but as a common friend, to discuss and settle their differences and respective claims, in a manner satisfactory to themselves, His Imperial Majesty showed the interest which he took in the welfare of both parties.

Wherever the United States may treat, they will treat with the sincere desire they have repeatedly manifested of terminating the present contest with Great Britain, on conditions of reciprocity consistent with the rights of both parties, as sovereign and independent nations, and calculated not only to establish present harmony, but to provide, as far as possible, against future collisions which might interrupt it.

Before giving an answer to the proposition communicated by your lordship to treat with the United States, independently of the Russian mediation, it would have been agreeable to the President to have heard from the plenipotentiaries of the United States sent to St. Petersburg. The offer of a mediation by one power, and the acceptance of it by another, forms a relation between them, the delicacy of which cannot but be felt. From the known character, however, of the Emperor, and the benevolent views with which his mediation was offered, the President cannot doubt that he will see with satisfaction a concurrence of the United States in an alternative, which, under existing circumstances, affords the best prospect of attaining speedily what was the object of his interposition. I am accordingly instructed to make known to your lordship, for the information of His Royal Highness the Prince Regent, that the President accedes to his proposition, and will take the measures, depending on him, for carrying it into effect, at Gottenburg, with as little delay as possible; it being presumed that his Majesty, the King of Sweden, as the friend of both parties, will readily acquiesce in the choice of a place for their pacific negotiations within his dominions.

The President is duly sensible of the attention of His Royal Highness the Prince Regent, in giv-

ing the orders to the admiral commanding the British squadron on this coast, which your lordship has communicated.

I have the honor, &c.

(Signed) JAS. MONROE.

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